

Message Text

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DOT PASS LINDBERG

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, CA

SUBJ: ALASKA HIGHWAY - HAINES RECONSTRUCTION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THIS CABLE REPORTS ON CURRENT STATUS OF GOC'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AGREED NEGOTIATING MANDATE. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SOURCE INDICATES THAT UNSPECIFIED EXTAFF OBJECTIONS ARE HOLDING UP SUBMISSION TO CABINET. END SUMMARY.

2. AT JANUARY 21 MEETING IN OTTAWA BETWEEN FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION TEAM AND REPRESENTATIVES OF GOC AGENCIES (ORGANIZED BY DEPT OF PUBLIC WORKS) A WIDE RANGE OF AGREEMENT WAS REACHED WITH RESPECT TO A POSSIBLE UNDERSTANDING TO PROVIDE FOR HIGHWAY RECONSTRUCTION. GOC OFFICIALS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED TENTATIVE NATURE THIS AGREEMENT AND INDICATED THEIR EXPRESSED VIEWS LACKED CABINET APPROVAL. THEY UNDERTOOK, HOWEVER, TO SEEK BY END OF FEBRUARY APPROVAL OF THE CONCEPTS DEVELOPED IN THE MEETINGS WITH FHWA SO THAT FORMAL NEGOTIATION COULD GO FORWARD.

3. THE END OF FEBRUARY DEADLINE HAS SLIPPED. TCO UNDERSTANDS FROM PUBLIC WORKS SOURCE THAT GOC DOMESTIC

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AGENCIES HAVE REACHED BROAD CONSENSUS ON A DRAFT PAPER

FOR CABINET CONSIDERATION WHICH CONTAINS THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE USG, BUT THAT EXTAFF IS CREATING PROBLEMS. EXTAFF'S REPRESENTATIVE IN INTER-GENCY DELIBERATIONS (MISS INGRID HALL, WHO SERVED AT THE CANADIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON FOR SOME YEARS PRIOR TO JOINING EXTAFF'S TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY DIVISION IN 1974) HAS INDICATED HESITATION, AND PERHAPS OPPOSITION, BUT HAS NOT ARTICULATED REASONS. PUBLIC WORKS IS ATTEMPTING TO GET PROJECT MOVING BY RAISING ISSUE TO HIGHER LEVELS IN EXTAFF BUT HAS NOT TO DATE BEEN SUCCESSFUL. PUBLIC WORKS SOURCE ADVISED THAT UNTIL EXTAFF'S OBJECTIONS ARE OVERCOME THE CABINET PAPER WILL PROBABLY BE STALLED.

4. IN CONVERSATION TWO WEEKS AGO MISS HALL TOLD TCO THERE WAS WIDESPREAD DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE DEPARTMENTS BUT THE ONLY ISSUE SHE IDENTIFIED SPECIFICALLY WAS THE FINANCIAL ONE (THE US LEGISLATION AUTHORITIES ONLY SOME \$58 MILLION FOR THE PROJECT AND THE CURRENT ESTIMATED COST BY GOC IS ABOUT \$185 MILLION) WHICH PUBLIC WORKS (AND REPORTEDLY THE OTHER AGENCIES) DOES NOT CONSIDER IMPORTANT BECAUSE VEN IF CONGRESS DOES NOT VOTE ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COMPLETE THE RECONSTRUCTION, CANADA WILL STILL POSSESS SOME USEFUL, IMPROVED HIGHWAY IN THE AREA.

5. ON MARCH 18, TCO DISCUSSED ISSUE WITH FULFORD (DIRECTOR, TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY DIV. AND MISS HALL'S BOSS). FULFORD, WHO ADMITTED HIS FAMILIARITY WITH DETAILS OF ISSUE WAS MINIMAL, DESCRIBED EXTAFF CONCERN AS ONE OF SECURING ADEQUATE CABINET APPROVAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH USG AND MAKING SURE ALL MINISTERS HAD FULL OPPORTUNITY TO CONTEMPLATE "POLITICAL" SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT AS TO WHAT "POLITICAL" SIGNIFICANCE MIGHT BE, BUT HE DID NOT APPEAR UNDULY CONCERNED WITH FINANCIAL ASPECT MENTIONED ABOVE. FULFORD AGREED TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO EXPEDITE DEVELOPMENT OF CABINET PAPER AND TO KEEP US INFORMED ON THE STATE OF THE GAME.

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6. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR MAY BE ASKED ABOUT THIS ISSUE AT A CONGRESSIONAL HEARING APRIL 10. WE WILL ATTEMPT PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITUATION BEFORE THAT DATE. PORTER

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